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SUBJECT: QUEBEC: PREMIER CHAREST ANNOUNCES NEW CABINET

1. With security breaches at Hydro Quebec installations dominating the media and popular support for his government a record low of 17 percent, embattled Quebec Premier Charest announced a long awaited Cabinet reshuffle. Given the outcry over security at Hydro Quebec, it is no surprise that both energy minister Sam Hamad and public security minister Jacques Chagnon were given the axe (although they were both on the outs even before this latest energy scandal). The new minister for Natural Resources and Wildlife, Pierre Corbeil, will handle two portfolios of importance to us, energy and softwood lumber. Michel Audet, who up to now was minister of Economic Development, moves over to Finance and the young Claude Bechard will fill in behind him. Yves Seguin, Quebec's most popular liberal politician, is now out of Charest's cabinet, reportedly because of frequent clashes with Charest over budget policy. In a speech following today's announcement, Charest said the objectives of the Quebec government are "the economy, development, and innovation" with an emphasis on sustainable development. Charest said the two big challenges for Quebec are righting finances and demographics. The new cabinet of 27 ministers includes three beneficiaries of the Department's International Visitors Program.

2. Following is the new Quebec cabinet line up, in order of precedence, as announced by Premier Jean Charest on Friday, February 18, 2005:

Jean Charest, Premier and Minister of Youth

Jacques Dupuis is new Deputy Premier and Minister of Public Security; he remains Parliamentary Leader of Government

Monique Jerome-Forget stays on as President of Treasury Board

Michel Audet becomes new Finance Minister

Monique Gagnon- Tremblay, stays on as Minister of International Relations and Francophonie, but is no longer Deputy Premier

Philippe Couillard, holds on to Health and Social Services portfolio

Jean-Marc Fournier becomes Education Minister while keeping Recreation and Sports (Fournier is a former IVP)

Yvon Marcoux, ex-Transport Minister becomes new Minister of Justice

Claude Bechard is promoted to new ministry of Economic Development, Innovation and Exports

Yvon Vallieres becomes Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, taking over from Francine Gauthier. (He is our new point man on BSE)

Thomas Mulcair takes on new Ministry of Sustainable Development and Parks

Pierre Corbeil is new Minister Natural Resources and Wildlife, replacing Sam Hamad (he will be taking on the softwood lumber issue)

Michel Despres upgraded to Transport Minister, and new Minister responsible for Quebec City region

Nathalie Normandeau (rising star and former Quebec City IVP) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions

Line Beauchamp stays on as Minister of Culture and Communications, new minister responsible for the Montreal region

Benoit Pelletier, in addition to his responsibilities of Canadian Intergovernmental Affairs becomes minister Responsible for Canadian Francophonie and Electoral Reform

Pierre Reid, demoted from Education to Minister of Government Services

Lawrence Bergman remains Minister of Revenue

Michelle Courchesne is now Minister of Employment and Social Solidarity

Francoise Gauthier is Minister of Tourism, from previous responsibilities at Agriculture

Carole Theberge, Minister of Family, Elderly and Status of Women

Laurent Lessard becomes Minister of Manpower

Lise Theriault (just returning from an IVP project) is Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities

Julie Boulet becomes Junior Minister of Transportation

Geoffrey Kelly is Minister responsible of Native Affairs

Henri-Francois Gautrin is new Minister responsible for On-Line Government

Margaret F. Delisle is Minister of Protection of Youth and Rehabilitation

Two other important, but non-ministerial positions are: Norman MacMillan as new Liberal Party Whip and David Whissel, President of Party Caucus.

FRIEDMAN